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ASSISTANT SECRETARY RICHARD BOUCHER, SCA/INS (MGOWER)

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TAGS: [ENRG](#) [ETTC](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [IN](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [NP](#) [CE](#)
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SUBJECT: BOUCHER DOES BUSINESS IN OSLO ON MARGINS OF
CO-CHAIRS

REF: 2006 OSLO 553

Classified By: ADCM Kristen Bauer, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. On the margins of the June 26 Sri Lanka Co-Chairs meetings, Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher met with high-level Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Defense officials, covering a broad range of matters including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Additionally, he privately conferred with German Director General for Asian and Pacific Affairs Ambassador Andreas Michaelis and Head of Germany's South Asia Unit Thomas Wriessnig, discussing Pakistan and Afghanistan matters. Boucher also gave interviews to a major Norwegian daily Dagsavisen and television station TV2. End Summary.

Norway's South Asian Assistance

12. (C) On June 25, Assistant Secretary Boucher met with Foreign Ministry Deputy Director General for Regional Affairs and Development Katja Nordgaard and Deputy Director General for South Asian Affairs Betzy Ellingsen Tunold, covering Nepal, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan issues. Nordgaard described the Nepalese move to a transitional constitution as "positive." Concerning Bangladesh, she believed encouraging signs were emerging, pointing out that the forthcoming local elections are crucial. Tunold outlined Norwegian assistance to Nepal and Bangladesh, which targeted education, good governance and hydropower infrastructure programs. The Government of Norway's Nepal assistance initiatives also focused on local peace-related activities, such as arranging seminars dedicated to peace and democracy-building (including workshops focusing on building local confidence with political systems). Both Nordgaard and Tunold recognized and supported U.S. efforts in both countries. Boucher also voiced optimism that both countries were moving in the right direction.

13. (C) Tunold described Norway's increased dealings with India, noting some frustration with Indian bureaucracies. A Foreign-Minister level meeting between both countries, originally scheduled for June, has been postponed. Separate Norwegian and Indian governmental working groups were created on several issues, ranging from science and technology to hydrocarbons, but have yet to meet. A position paper on climate matters, presented by Norwegian Foreign Minister Stoere to the India last year, has not yet been addressed by

the Indian side. Nordgaard also questioned whether the Indian Government could appropriately handle the resulting waste stemming from its nuclear program, in relation to the impending U.S.-Indian civilian nuclear cooperation initiative. Boucher responded that the U.S. felt confident that there were no undue problems concerning waste disposal.

¶4. (C) Boucher presented U.S. plans for development assistance to Pakistan, and described the Regional Opportunity Zone concept, which we hope to take up with Congress shortly. Nordgaard replied that Pakistan was indeed high on the Norwegian agenda, with focus on Pakistan's "long way forward."

Solheim's Views on South Asia

¶5. (C) Joined by Ambassador Whitney, Assistant Secretary Boucher met with International Development Minister Erik Solheim, discussing Afghanistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Concerning Afghanistan, Boucher discussed U.S. development assistance, the need for improved and visible high-level international civilian coordination, and the forthcoming Rome Rule of Law Conference. With respect to governance issues, Solheim noted that Faryab province was "wholly corrupt," but recognized that the Norwegian Government must deal with "the people that are there." While Solheim welcomed U.S. civilian development assistance, he expressed concern for reliable Afghan governance structures which can be self-sustaining. He also voiced concern about collateral damage from NATO forces, stating that "too many Afghan citizens have been killed" from NATO actions.

¶6. (C) Solheim stressed that NATO support in Afghanistan was not popular in Norway, nor Europe in general. Stating that "we did not have a September 11 here," Solheim remarked that "the vast majority of Norwegians do not believe we should be in far-away places," as Norway has "no tradition" of military involvement abroad. Also, he warned that either major losses to Norwegian NATO forces, or Norwegians popularly believing that the Afghan mission was "immoral" as a result of high "collateral damage" could cause a backlash against the Norwegian Afghanistan presence. He stressed that the NATO key to success should be arriving at an end point where foreign troops were unnecessary.

¶7. (C) Regarding Nepal, the Minister found it essential that an election date should be set, and adhered to. He also called for bringing into the government people from various castes and minorities, and ensuring that a responsible, inclusive government not solely composed of "Kathmandu Brahmins" be established.

¶8. (C) Solheim spoke candidly of Sri Lanka, noting that the Government of Sri Lanka had "absolutely no strategy" as to solving the Tamil problem. He advocated clear, unified international measures to put an end to human rights abuses, while immediately providing access to people in need in northeast Sri Lanka. Additionally, he called for both the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to prepare for a cessation of hostilities. He noted frustration that there was yet a clear-cut answer as to whether the Government would allow Norwegian peace facilitators into the Tiger-controlled areas. Boucher raised the issue of engaging international experts, such as Canadians, within the peace dialogue. Solheim believed that the Tigers would be firmly against setting definitive deadlines at all costs.

State Secretary Johansen Discusses Afghanistan, Pakistan

¶9. (C) Following up on his meeting last year with Foreign Ministry State Secretary Raymond Johansen (ref A), Boucher raised several Afghanistan issues, including the concept of a senior UN civilian assistance coordinator, and European support for Afghan development assistance. Johansen raised concerns about Iran, questioning why the Government of Iran

would get involved in supporting the Taliban, when such actions invariably created an influx of Afghan refugees into Iran. Boucher explained that while the motives may not be clear, the evidence that Iran is exporting weapons to the Taliban is. Johansen appreciated U.S. civilian development efforts, but commented that Provincial Reconstruction Teams were not "easy concepts." He revealed that Norway had difficulty persuading Norwegian NGOs to get involved in supporting the Norwegian-controlled Provincial Reconstruction Team in Meymaneh, located in Faryab province. Johansen called for a better international approach in Afghanistan to reduce the number of civilian casualties.

¶10. (C) Johansen noted that the Norwegian Government was closely following events in Pakistan, given that Pakistanis are the largest immigrant population in Norway (and are actively involved in the Norwegian political scene). He warned that a destabilized Pakistan would create problems in Afghanistan.

Defense Ministry Meeting

¶11. (C) Assistant Secretary Boucher met with Ministry of Defense State Secretary Espen Barth Eide, discussing Norway's military role in the Memaneh Provincial Reconstruction Team, its Quick Reaction Force in Mazar-e-Sharif and the Norwegian Kabul deployment. Contradicting Minister Solheim's observations, Barth Eide stated that there existed "solid support for Norway's Afghanistan policies," with "100 percent of the Parliamentarians" supporting Norway's position. Barth Eide expressed concern as to whether development assistance is resulting in political progress. Reflecting on Boucher's views of international cooperation in Afghanistan, without undermining the Afghani government, the State Secretary called U.S. policy "very close to our thinking," with Norway seeing no need to "overhaul the entire system." Barth Eide agreed that a single contact with the Afghan government, who could deal with the international community, would be most helpful.

¶12. (C) Barth Eide found that Norway faced a paradox with the warlords in Northern Afghanistan: the Norwegians needed their assistance to remove the Taliban, but the warlords did not embrace the democratic and anti-corruption measures which Norway championed.

¶13. (C) Concerning military strategy, Barth Eide cited the need to strengthen training, while noting Norway's commitment the Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (OMLT) approach. (Note: Ministry Staff later explained that getting approval of the Liaison Teams was an important step forward by Norway. End Note.) Turning to the Telemark Battalion, Barth Eide revealed that there are no plans to commit the full battalion, although part of the battalion will come in as the Quick Reaction Force. Although he noted that most of the Norwegian Special Forces operate in the Regional Command Center, these forces can leave that area "when necessary." He reiterated that Norwegian deployment to Kandahar was not possible.

Meeting with German Diplomats: Pakistan and Afghanistan

¶14. (C) Ambassador Boucher met privately with German diplomats Ambassador Andreas Michaelis (Asia Director) and Thomas Wriessnig. They reviewed the Afghan and Pakistani meetings during the G-8 summit, with Michaelis discussing a follow-up Berlin meeting planned for October. He reiterated that 50-60 projects were endorsed by Pakistan and Afghanistan within the G-8 context, with Germany supporting 4-5 projects. Boucher explained that U.S. seeks European support for Tribal Area development. They also discussed the need for the transformation of Pakistan's Frontier Corps. Concerning the U.S. plan to create Reconstruction Opportunity Zones in Pakistan and Afghanistan, Wriessnig noted that the European

Commission was unlikely to follow the U.S. lead Wriessnig also discussed Germany's plans to construct schools for Afghans living in Pakistan. Boucher floated the concept of a high-level UN figure for the coordination of civilian assistance in Afghanistan, which interested Michaelis and Wriessnig.

¶15. (C) Michealis briefly referred to his recent Tehran meetings concerning refugees, where he met with officials including the Iranian Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Deputy Interior Minister. He believes that the Iranians were serious and genuine about their concerns involving narcotics and weapon smuggling in Afghanistan. Michaelis noted that the Iranians denied any Taliban collaboration.

Norwegian Media

¶16. (SBU) A/S Boucher was interviewed by Dagsavisen and the Norwegian media station TV2. The interviews largely focused on Sri Lanka, with the Dagsavisen article entitled "Sees No Military Solution for Sri Lanka." Foreign Ministry Sri Lanka Adviser Sondre Bjotveit extended the Norwegian Government's appreciation for Boucher's "positive remarks" concerning Norway's role as facilitator.
Whitney